

515

CLEANLINESS. — The Koryak can by no means be classed among cleanly people. With extremely rare exceptions, resulting from the civilizing influence of the Russians, they do not wash. The faces of children, as well as those of old people, are covered with a layer of dirt and soot mixed with fat, so that it is difficult to determine the natural color of their skin. Only the girls and young women washed their faces before coming to us to be measured. Mucus from the nostrils is almost always a decoration of the children, and the older people are frequently not far behind them in this respect.

262

515

[763]

The kettles in which the food is cooked are full of reindeer and dog hair, which fall from the clothes and fill the air of the Koryak house. The Koryak kill lice, which are regarded by them as properly belonging to a healthy man, with their teeth. There is a prevailing belief among them, as well as among the Yukaghir, that when a man is deserted by lice he will soon die. They eat also the large larvæ which develop from the eggs deposited by the reindeer-flies in the hair of the reindeer. No matter how putrid food may be, the Koryak have no aversion to it, and they will even drink the urine of persons intoxicated with fly-agaric.

164

DISEASES. — Among non-contagious diseases, the most frequent are derangements of the digestive organs, caused by irregular nutrition and the use of putrid fish and meat. Complaints of pain in the stomach are frequent, and the Maritime branch of the tribe especially suffer from the tape-worm. Tetters, scabies, and other skin-diseases, are very common, owing to their filthy habits.

Diseases of the eyes — such as inflammation of the lids, or an affection of the cornea — are widely spread. This is to be attributed to the action of smoke in the underground houses of the Maritime Koryak, and to the reflected light of the snow in the spring. People suffering from conjunctivitis and cataract are frequently met with; but I saw only three cases of blindness during my travels, and the three so affected were people of middle age. From the Report of 1884, by Dr. Uspenski, the district physician who visited some Koryak settlements and camps, there were found, in 70 houses visited, 14 persons suffering from cataract,¹ which is a large percentage.

● [732]

158

The Koryak are not subject to nervous diseases to the same extent as other arctic tribes, though some are afflicted with symptoms of the two forms of nervousness so frequently met with in the Arctic region. These two forms are widely prevalent among the Yukaghir, Tungus, Yakut, and also among the Russian immigrants. They are generally known by the Yakut names of meryak and menerik; but there are specific names in all the languages of the arctic tribes, not only for these two diseases, but for their various symptoms as well.² However, it is probable that these two forms of nervous suffering are symptomatic manifestations of arctic hysteria.

¹ Taken from the Government Archives of Gishiginsk.

² A more detailed description of these diseases will be given in my work on the Yukaghir.